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PROVISION REQUIRED

FOR THE

RELIEF AND SUPPORT

OF

DISABLED SOLDIERS AND SAILORS

AND THEIR DEPENDENTS.

A Report to the Standing Committee

OF THE

U. S. SANITARY COMMISSION,

BY REV. HENRY W. BELLOWS, D. D., PRESIDENT.

NEW YORK, *December 15, 1865.*

To the Standing Committee

of the United States Sanitary Commission:

GENTLEMEN—On the 9th of November, 1865, the Board requested me to prepare a report upon the wants of sick and disabled soldiers, with such account of the existing provisions for their relief as I might be able to collect.

The subject had engaged the attention of the Sanitary Commission from a very early period of the war. Feeling that the time would come, when it must engross public attention, and that it was very desirable to collect the whole experience of foreign countries in advance, we took advantage of the going abroad of one of our most intelligent students into social questions, Mr. Stephen H. Perkins, of Boston, to engage him while visiting the chief military countries in

Europe, to collect all documents and pursue all inquiries relating to the subject of pensions, military asylums, and the methods of favoring by civil offices in the gift of the government, the soldiers disabled in war. Mr. Perkins investigated the subject thoroughly and made a valuable report, which was printed, and served as the basis of an elaborate essay on the general subject, prepared under the direction of the Commission in April, 1864, which contains the materials of much instruction to all future legislators in this department. On the 15th August, 1862, I addressed a letter of general instructions to Mr. Perkins,* on his departure for Europe, in which the peculiar relations of American institutions to the probable wants of our disabled soldiers, not then in existence, was fully dwelt upon. It seemed to me, even then, that the young and vigorous civilization of America, with the respect for labor and the habits of personal self reliance prevailing among us, and the open opportunities of the new country, would prevent the question of provision for our sick and wounded soldiers from ever becoming one of very urgent and burdensome character; that the experience of countries with a long past, very settled social distinctions, and a thick and crowded population, where labor was cheap and poverty common, would afford little that was instructive to us, except in the way of contrast; that the splendor of the names of certain military and naval asylums abroad, the Hotel des Invalides, the Hospitals in Vienna, Naples, and Berlin, the Hospitals at Chelsea and Greenwich, were likely enough to stimulate our national and state pride to attempt some similar institutions really not needed, while the lively sympathy of the people, grateful toward the wounded and disabled heroes of the war, might, when inflamed by local rivalries in this popular kind of benevolence, multiply very injuriously as well as needlessly the refuges and charities of our returned soldiers. It seemed to us, that our pride, as a democratic nation, ought to point just in the other direc-

* See Appendix.

tion; i. e., towards such a shaping of public opinion as would tend to reduce dependence among our returned soldiers to the lowest possible point; to quicken the local and family sense of responsibility, so as to make each neighborhood and each household, out of which a soldier had gone, and returned helpless and dependent, feel itself privileged and bound to take care of him; to weaken all disposition towards eleemosynary support; to encourage every community to do its utmost towards favoring the employment of returned soldiers, and especially partially disabled ones in all light occupations; to make mendicancy and public support disreputable for all with any ability, however partial, to help themselves; to prevent the public mind from settling into European notions in regard to military asylums; especially to guard the subject from the artificial excitement which political and medical aspirants to place and power might strive to communicate to it, and to keep it as far as might be, from state rivalries, party emulation, and civic ambition. In short, we desired to favor in every way the proud and beneficent tendency of our vigorous American civilization, to heal its wounds by the first intention; to absorb the sick and wounded men into its ordinary life, providing for them through those domestic and neighborly sympathies, that local watchfulness and furtherance due to the weakness and wants of men well known to their fellow citizens, and which is given without pride and received without humiliation; and, this source of relief failing, then from the ordinary charities of the towns and counties from which they had sprung.

The facts, furnished by Mr. Perkins's report,* prove that

*An examination of Mr. Perkins's Report furnishes us the following facts:

Foreign Pensions as compared with American.

In France the minimum is 1 franc per diem, say

	20	cents	per	diem.
Prussia.....	21	“	“	
Austria.....	21	“	“	
America.....	27	“	“	

foreign experience, as we foresaw, chiefly teaches us what is to be avoided; that their pension systems, France excepted, are wholly inadequate even to the wants of the cheap countries of Europe, driving the disabled into asylums, and would be absurdly deficient in America; that their great asylums, the Hotel des Invalides, the military hospitals at Berlin, Vienna, and Naples, are costly failures, measured by their success in protecting the character or promoting the happiness of the

In France one-fifth of pensions being officers, receive	$\frac{15}{23}$	of whole fund.
In Prussia	$\frac{28}{53}$	“ “
Austria, including widows,	$\frac{28}{33}$	“ “
In America, (at present not computed.)		

The foreign continental pension systems are all ordered with reference to maintaining the military status, as something above the ordinary civil status, and of making as broad a distinction between those who are and those who are not soldiers. Also, in confirmation of the aristocratic system, in which the officers are hailed as a sort of nobles when compared with the common soldiers. The usage, too, of providing for the younger sons of the nobility in the army, produces a very unjust exaggeration of the pensions for officers.

There is, too, no proper adjustment of the pension system to the hospital or asylum system; so that every encouragement is given to entering the hospital rather than accepting the pension. In France this is less true, but in Italy and Prussia, especially, sadly true. There are at least 10,000 men in military asylums in Italy out of 30,000 pensioners.

The *Versorgungs-schein*, or furnishing of a right to claim preference in civil employments, while favorable to the employment of the disabled, is very unfavorable to the rights of civilians and would not answer in this country.

The absence of any employment in the military hospitals abroad is usually recognized as a great defect, and the cause of drunkenness to a terrible extent.

As the number of years of service—15, 20, and 25 years—furnish a heightened claim to rights of pension and asylum abroad, there is a peculiarity in it applying only to military governments employing large standing armies after the continental system, which has nothing corresponding to it in our country. Possibly the analogy may unhappily increase in future years.

men who occupy them, everywhere creating ennui, drunkenness, and discontent. Since these reports, Chelsea and Greenwich Hospitals, tired of their experience, have resolved, as rapidly as possible, to scatter on pensions their dependents, and in so doing have, in our judgment, settled forever the inexpediency of creating permanent military or naval asylums. They have long had nothing in their favor but national pride, and the necessity of having some place where a small per centage of homeless and friendless incurables could be sent to die, or be taken care of through their helpless lives. This small number, it now appears, are more wisely attached to other public charities, and in a scattered way provided for, as a small per centage of the indigent and wholly dependent portion of the public, than made a separate class of, and kept as a public show.

None can have failed to admire the tendency which so suddenly and quietly dissolved our vast and compact armies, and before the exultation of their victories had died away, distributed them far and wide over the land, setting them back in the furrow, the workshop, the bench, the mill, the mine, out of which they had come at the nation's cry "To arms." It must be already obvious that this benignant tendency of our free and popular institutions, so amazing to Europe, is equally operative over our sick and wounded men, who have got out of the hospitals in an incredibly short time, their wounds rapidly healed by the hope of getting home, and the stimulus of the self-respectful necessity of resuming work again; their limbs already replaced by artificial members; their homes and friends and old comrades insisting on their return to their old places, where protection, aid in finding occupation, and all sorts of kindness have awaited them.

In May last we had still 183 general hospitals in operation, with 78,313 patients. To-day we have only 20 hospitals open, and not more than 2,463 patients under treatment. Such an anxiety to get away from the abundant and benignant care of the Government have our sick and disabled soldiers manifested, that their spirit of self-help and independence has no doubt cost many of them their lives. At their own urgent

petition they have often been suffered to leave before prudence warranted, and, too early out of hospital, many of them have fallen into the homes and lodges of the Sanitary Commission, and in many instances died on our hands. We have seen hundreds much too feeble to travel, using what seemed to us their last strength in reaching their homes. It is obvious enough that such a spirit as this, though it may kill its proud exhibitors, will not leave many willing dependents on the public bounty!

For a few months, while our soldiers were passing to their homes, and stopping in transitu in our cities, there was a quantity considerable in itself, although very small in percentage, of mendicancy among our soldiers. Convalescents just out of hospital, and not half as well as they thought themselves, were appealing for assistance. The railroad cars and street cars presented also the spectacle of numerous invalids wan and feeble. We saw in our cities all the suffering of invalidism, all the beggary and want of the war, just at its close, passing before us at one review. The public mistook this to a great extent for the mere beginning of a worse ending, or, at the best, as a permanent condition of things. They thought they were seeing a sample, when they were really looking at the whole piece. The public imagination was greatly inflamed, and numerous and piteous appeals were made for creating asylums and homes for a great army of sick and disabled soldiers. But already, and in spite of the cold season, which closes navigation and stops so many kinds of work, this spectacle of mendicant, unemployed, and vagrant soldiers, or of sick and disabled men, has so rapidly disappeared, that, continuing at the same rate, it is now certain in one more year to furnish no longer a subject of considerable anxiety. All our predictions and hopes have been doubly fulfilled. The disposition to provide in larger and expensive ways for sick and disabled soldiers, in public asylums, has almost entirely ceased. Without concert, and without even general reasonings, with little or no knowledge of foreign experience, the healthy mind of the American people all over the country has gravitated (as we shall presently prove) to one result.

With every disposition to do all that is necessary for sick and disabled soldiers, and with a greater readiness to extend relief to them—to erect shelters over their heads, to provide for them while they live—than to exercise any other form of charity, there has been so little pressure upon them, so little disposition to avail themselves of these opportunities on the part of the invalids themselves, that a general lull in the efforts to raise money for this purpose, or to carry out projects in this direction, shows itself at all the great centres of our military population, and we can safely predict that very few of the hundred schemes that have been brewing in the hearts of private philanthropists or of public legislators will survive a twelvemonth of this uniform public experience.

Although these open and universal facts, obvious to all eyes, are more decisive than any special and classified testimony, yet, to satisfy ourselves further upon these points, I requested Mr. Knapp, our Special Relief Agent, to address a letter of inquiry to the most expert persons at the chief centres of our military strength, the regions where our soldiers enlisted, and to which they have now returned, asking certain questions, the nature of which the letter itself will best show:

NEW YORK, Nov. 17, 1865.

MY DEAR SIR—I desire to obtain certain facts concerning sick and disabled soldiers, and take the liberty of asking your aid in procuring the information for me.

What do you judge is the number in your city and vicinity of seriously disabled soldiers who would properly be received at a “Soldier’s Home,” or an Asylum? What proportion is this to the whole number of men from your city and vicinity? What is the nature of the disability of these men? What proportion are disabled as the result of wounds? What proportion as the result of sickness? Are there many of them who are blind? Are many of them idiotic, or with weakened minds?

What, so far as you have observed, is the nationality of these men needing most aid?

What provision has been made in your city for disabled soldiers; and, if any, what has been the success of the undertaking?

Can you inform me whether the feeling of the necessity of such institutions as "Soldiers' Homes," or asylums, has of late increased or diminished?

I would also ask, whether the soldiers' families—their widows and orphans—are or are not a larger and more important class of sufferers than the "disabled soldier class," and how among you their wants are met?

I do not seek detailed or minutely accurate answers to these questions, but such as will give an idea of real needs, and how to meet them.

If you will write me within a few days in response to this letter, you will confer a favor which will be gratefully acknowledged.

I am, dear sir,

Very truly, your friend,

FRED. N. KNAPP,

Superintendent of Special Relief.

This letter was sent to different parts of the country to twenty-seven persons, men and women distinguished for their practical experience with this class of sufferers, their relief labors, their tried humanity, and living at the points of most interest and importance. A majority of these letters have been answered, and if they had not almost absolutely concurred in their replies, and coming from widely scattered regions, put beyond question what the nature of the others would be, I should have waited till all came in before drawing my conclusions. But such is the urgent importance of settling the public mind as far as possible, and of giving such direction as wisdom and experience may furnish to the opinions of Congress, soon to legislate upon the subject, that I have thought it best to wait no longer for testimony which is certain only to confirm the evidence already abundant, which is here brought forward. The fact that the testimony precisely bears out the expectations of the Commission formed

the first year of the war—expectations based on the American character and the nature of our institutions—indicates clearly enough that any remaining testimony will only strengthen what is already sufficiently established.

These letters, filed and tabulated for reference in our office, (where any one specially interested can consult them,) show that the number of sick and disabled men needing any public care, or even asking for it, is exceedingly small compared either with the size of our armies or the expectation of the public. It is not because a very large class of sick and disabled men does not exist, scattered through the country, but because these men are the objects of a proud and tender domestic or neighborly care, and withdrawn from public view, as it is desirable they should be.

Thousands, we doubt not, are declining rapidly or slowly in the bosom of their homes, uncomplaining, and even hiding, in many cases, their griefs and their wants. The only form in which such noble sufferers can be reached by the public gratitude, in a way not to demean and injure their pride, is, by an improved pension law. The existing pension law is a great mercy, so great that the necessity of giving up a claim upon one's pension in order to become an inmate of a national asylum, is a sufficient check and a most wholesome one to thousands from applying. Moderately increased, it would still further lessen the claimants on this objectionable form of public support, and no asylum or hospital from any cause should fail to make this relinquishment a condition of its protection and support.

But while this number is comparatively and unexpectedly small, it is yet in its aggregate considerable.

There may be, take the country through, 2,000 persons, so homeless, so helpless, so utterly disabled by sickness or wounds, that they must, all of them for a while, become the objects of public support in Asylums or Soldiers Homes. Among these, as we shall presently see, are few, almost no Americans. They are chiefly Irish and German; 75 per cent. Irish, 15 or 20 per cent. German, and the residue of

other foreign nationalities. We doubt if 2 per cent. would turn out Americans! Now this is not only because Americans have a spirit above dependence, but also because they have natural friends, homes, parents, brothers, or in all cases, neighborhoods where their claims are recognized and allowed. A foreigner, enlisting in many instances just upon his arrival at the beginning of the war, or who came over for the very purpose of joining the army, if disabled, has nothing to look to but the care of a country grateful for his services.

Practically, so far as public asylums are concerned, it is almost exclusively a question of what shall be done for the soldiers of foreign birth, and chiefly new comers. Were it only Americans to be considered, there would be positively no occasion for any public asylums. But the claims of foreigners, losing limbs, health, the power of self-support in our military service, are just as sacred as those of natives, in some respects even more so, as natives may be supposed to have had greater reasons for going into the field, and to have owed a more obvious debt to the country. The wholly disabled Americans are, for the most part, patiently, and under tender care, dragging out their lives in American homes; the disabled foreigners chiefly in public asylums, alms-houses, and hospitals. Their case is indeed often a pitiable one.

In estimating at 2,000, the number of such as need, for the current year, Retreats and Refuges specially designed for them, we assume the following facts to be well established in the evidence on our files.

The places we have heard from, which it was considered important to address, give us about a thousand cases. Assuming that this represents one-half of the total, we have 2,000 as the outside number. Probably this is a large estimate. It is manifest that the agricultural regions will absorb the disabled soldiers more rapidly than the manufacturing regions or the cities; not so much because our invalids are better adapted to farm work, for the very reverse is the case, but because living is so much cheaper, and another mouth in a farmer's family, living on his own products, is no considerable drain as it is found to be in cities and crowded districts.

Although the West has been most prompt in proposing Asylums and Homes for disabled soldiers, we do not expect to see more than half as great a need of them there as at the East; especially, because, the foreign population from which our asylums are filled, belongs very largely, and particularly the newer portion of it, to our cities. The best established "Home" for disabled soldiers (excepting that at Washington) now in existence, perhaps, is at Columbus, Ohio. It is large and amply furnished, and has proclaimed its readiness to receive all disabled soldiers who apply, without regard to State lines. The Cincinnati Branch of the United States Sanitary Commission has appropriated \$15,000, and the Cleveland Branch \$5,000, to its support until the Ohio Legislature meets, (January, 1866,) from which an ample endowment is expected. Yet up to this time only 130 have applied for admittance!

The largest number of disabled soldiers requiring asylum, in any one neighborhood, is apparently at Philadelphia, where Mr. R. M. Lewis (and no one can give a wiser judgment) estimates them at 400. This must seem a very large per centage for the city, or even the State. But we are to bear in mind the fact, that in that city both the Washington and Baltimore, as well as the great local hospitals, have emptied their dregs, and we must expect to find, as the Government hospitals close, the full number of Mr. Lewis's estimate thrown upon some "Home" or asylum there. We consider it a most encouraging fact that at this most fruitful point of want only so many as 400 disabled men are to be provided for. And it is a pleasure to know that an institution, already worth a hundred thousand dollars, is in existence there to minister to these needy and deserving soldiers.

Mr. Knapp, as the result of thorough, personal examinations recently made, estimates only 150 as the constant average of New York city and immediate neighborhood. No doubt this number will prove for some time near the real amount of fit candidates for this kind of care. Double this number will always be applying, for New York is the natural home of the most skillful and successful beggary, and all the

idlers and drones who went into the war under the attractions of the bounty will return to this city to live by their wits or their frauds. But it is as the metropolis, the place where the foreign element which has been in the war (especially the Irish) will present their claims. The "Lincoln Home" of the United States Sanitary Commission, at 45 Grove street, which opened last May, has not yet had one pure native American on its books. Nine-tenths of its beneficiaries are, and have always been and will always continue to be, Irish, the other tenth chiefly German. It is most creditable to the Germans that they do not learn in their own country the shameless beggary of the Irish, and so do not, even when as poorly off, straightway slip into mendicancy and dependence here in America.

Doubtless one or two years will carry off quite a per centage of the 2,000 we estimate as the present number of men needing asylum. A certain portion of them will rapidly weary of confinement, and as they get better, solicit and find light occupation; others will learn trades suited to their disability, and be able to make their own living. We expect to see the number of helpless invalids, unable to do better and left on the hands of the people, considerably reduced within a very few years; and this in spite of the fact, which we do not lose sight of, that as the men spend their bounty and back pay, some who have supported themselves hitherto, will, after a few months, fall into public dependence; others, struggling with disease and reluctantly giving up, will, after a year or two, come to the same fate. Already it is found in our asylums that a good many of the applicants are men prematurely old, who wore out the remnants of a constitution in the army, and at fifty have no stamina for work.

It would be idle, therefore, and a wicked waste of money, and time, and wisdom, to make permanent provision, for so distant a future only as twenty years, for even a thousand men. And far more than this provision is certain to be made; nay, exists in part already in the National Soldier's Home, at Washington; Soldier's Home, at Boston, Mass.; the Ohio State Home, at Columbus, Ohio; the Soldier's and

Sailor's Home, Philadelphia; the Lincoln Home, New York; Soldier's Home, (projected,) Milwaukee, Wis.; Soldier's Home, at Chicago; Soldier's Home, Penn Yan, Yates Co., N. Y.; Soldier's Home in some part of Indiana; a Soldier's Rest at Syracuse. A Sanitary Commission Home at St. Louis, and probably several other Homes and Asylums ought to be added to this list, which professes no completeness. Several other plans like the "Harris Hospital" at Albany, are in gestation.

There seems no need whatever to urge this form of provision, as it appears certain to be over done without any additional stimulus. What is vastly more important, is to make *prompt temporary provision* for the 2,000 men, more or less, who need immediate care; to build no slow, expensive palaces; to aim at no permanent institutions, but to meet the exigences of the case; and to do no more until the future necessities of this class can be more exactly measured. If a hundred thousand dollars exists in the hands of a body of trustees, for the interests of disabled men, their duty is, not to hoard it and spend the interest, not to lay it out in a purchase of house and grounds, and beg money to support their Asylum, but to hire a modest and suitable place, and support it out of their principal as long as it lasts, and when ten years have used it up, learn that the occasion for their asylum has passed away.

We hope to see no great national institutions rising at Washington or elsewhere.

The evidence obtained of the nature of the disability, which is generally loss of limbs, or occasioned by wounds, rather than by sickness, is probably due to the fact that the sick either get well, die, or as invalids, find light employment, while limbless men take much longer to accommodate themselves to their condition; are thrown much more out of their old callings, have a much more obvious claim on public sympathy, or are much easier to put forward and so contract a readier habit of dependence. It is pleasant to state that very many men with one arm have found occupation in our cities as messengers, and that systematic efforts, already very successful in Boston, and quite so in New York, are now

making to establish in our cities the foreign plan of *commissionaires*, under thorough drill and with substantial responsibility, to serve as light porters, messengers, and guides, as temporary servants to strangers in the cities, and to perform the thousand offices which all travellers on the continent will remember so well the convenience of having received from them in Paris and all along the route of continental travel. It is believed that a corps of 500 men, neatly uniformed, and under semi-military drill, well selected from among our invalid soldiers, would find a comfortable support in the city of New York as *commissionaires*. Philadelphia would, doubtless, support at least half as many, and perhaps Boston a hundred. The country at large could well employ 1,500 men in this way. We learn that the messengers, in this city not soldiers generally, ragged, dirty, and repulsive as they often are, who now assume partially this career, are making from one to two dollars a day when in the least attentive to their duties. The fifty in our Sanitary Commission Bureau of Employment do even better than this.

The general disposition which the men of the "Veteran Reserve Corps" have shown to be disbanded, (90 per cent. of the whole,) proves that the necessity for public support is far less urgent than we thought. In no other country but ours could such a testimony be furnished in evidence of the openness of career offered to all, as this voluntary relinquishment, for more inviting prospects, of living wages, on the part of a large body of men, whose support the Government had assumed as an act of justice and humanity.

It is instructive to notice that the per centage of men disabled by blindness is very small. This is a remarkable testimony to the general excellence of our commissariat and our hospital system; since blindness, by reason of wounds, is inconsiderable compared with what grows out of bad food, unhealthy lodging, disregard for all sanitary laws, and ignorance of ophthalmic surgery; above all, from special diseases and contagious disorders to which crowded places, camps, and hospitals are subject. The United States of America has an enviable freedom from blindness as compared

with other nation? 1 to 2,470 being the ratio to our population; not one half what it is in Great Britain; while in France, it is 1 to 938, and in Norway 1 to 540. No class of disabled men deserves greater sympathy than those wholly blinded by the war; a hardship almost strictly proportioned to the want of internal resource and mental activity. It is a special satisfaction to find this class so small. The idiotic, too, turn out much less than was feared from the terrible effect which rebel prisons had, at least temporarily, upon the brains of our weaker-minded men.

To revert again to the nationality of our disabled men applying for public aid, they are, in the Eastern and Middle States, Irish and German almost exclusively, and in the proportion of 75 and 20 per cent., respectively, of the whole number; while in the Northwest, and probably in the West, they are German and Irish, perhaps in about equal proportion, or 45 per cent. each of the whole.

It is a just source of pride that while about 80 per cent. of our whole army was composed of native citizens, 90 per cent. of all the drafted men requiring aid, are of foreign extraction; a fact which that portion of the English press, long in the habit of attributing our victories to mercenaries from abroad, may digest as it best can.

It is plain, from all that has been said, that the anxiety of the public in regard to wholly disabled men, requiring care and support in public asylums, which now appears to be a comparatively small and very manageable class, has distracted attention from that vastly more important class of sufferers, lingering uncomplainingly in their homes, who have claims on the Pension Bureau, which, small as they are, are very slowly settled, and which, when paid, furnish a very meagre expression of the gratitude of the country toward its greatest and most self-sacrificing benefactors.

The Sanitary Commission, early feeling the importance of the relief which the present system might afford the invalids of the war and their families, established a Special Bureau for the gratuitous collection of soldiers claims, (back pay, bounty, pensions, &c.,) which, extending all over the United

States, has rendered most efficient service in saving soldiers and their families from the thousand harpies preying on their ignorance and their necessities. By making known the rights and claims of soldiers in all communities, it has also advanced the work of the Pension Bureau in a very important degree. It is alleged, that half the claims of soldiers and their families, for a given period, passed through our offices. But no effort of ours could very much relieve the delay which, unavoidably or otherwise, has occurred in the settlement of soldiers' claims and those of their widows and orphans. But leaving the question of the settlement of soldiers' claims, there is a question of still more importance, which concerns the insufficiency of the pension allowed.

Eight dollars per month for a man who has lost a limb, or is otherwise equally disabled, twenty for one who has lost both feet, and twenty-five for one who has lost both hands or both eyes, is much too little to meet their necessities. What a feeble reciprocation, too, is eight dollars per month to the poor widow, with her orphan children to support and educate, who has given her husband and the protector of their offspring up to his country? The subject is too large and too complicated to be treated here in anything but a most general way. It is full of minute and embarrassing details, which only an expert can understand, and there is no official work on the subject. What we have to suggest is, that the pension system is the true system for the relief of our invalided and disabled soldiers—their widows and orphans; that it deserves a far more careful, generous, and constant consideration than it seems to receive; that it should occupy the time and sympathies which are so much more readily expended upon schemes of showy, debilitating charity. The pension is a debt due the soldier and his widow and orphans, which it does not demean them to receive, which they have a moral right to claim, and which ought to be adjusted to their necessities, and made adequate to their relief or support. If there be any direction in which the public money may be expended with freedom, without complaint on the part of tax-payers, though with a generous

leaning to indulgence, it is in the matter of pensions. At present, the provision is pernicious and disgraceful to the nation. We desire, in a democratic country, to see the private soldier honored, and his life, services, and sacrifices valued at the full by a grateful country. The disposition to heap richly merited honors and emoluments on a few distinguished officers only, is not worthy of a nation that knows no difference in the political claims of its citizens, and values men not for rank or station, but for merit and personal worth. We have seen too much of the patriotic spirit of our common soldiers, and of their wives and children, not to feel that they are wronged by the scrimped and paltry pensions they draw, after the precious sacrifices they have made. Two years ago we offered bounties with an almost humiliating eagerness to the worst men whom we could press into the ranks—bounties which, in one sum, often exceeded what ten years' pension pays a disabled soldier, or his widowed and orphaned family. Now, looking back on the services we were ready to bribe so lavishly, we are slow to value them, after they are rendered, at any reasonable sum! For ourselves, we held the bounty system as a disgrace, reproaching the spirit of our volunteers, demoralizing the country, and letting down the war, by its mercenary aspect, both in foreign eyes and our own. But a fit pendant for this disgrace is the present set of pension laws. If the bounties already paid could only have been saved to increase the pensions, how much better and more honorable for the country it would be! Still it is fair to say, that no country offers as good military pensions as ours, even at present rates; but let it be remembered that foreign wages are no standard for America, and foreign pensions no rule for us.

We believe the pension system is the proper substitute for military asylums. We could desire that the wholly disabled, who claim public support, should be pensioned to the full extent of their living, board, and clothes, and then suffered to go where they please, and look up their own residence and their own protectors. It would be both more humane, more economical for the country, and more favorable to the temper and spirit of our people.

This may be illustrated by the history of the National Soldiers' Home at Washington. We had 73,260 officers and men engaged in the Mexican war. The National Soldiers' Home was founded, we believe, on the money paid General Scott by the city of Mexico for sparing the captured city from sack. To this sum, doubtless, large appropriations have been added, besides the amount collected from the assessment which is laid upon all soldiers of the regular army. What it has cost, we have no means of knowing; but we should be surprised to find it less than half a million. It is a beautiful and attractive place, both as to house and grounds, and in the immediate vicinity of Washington. All regulars and pensioners of the volunteers, on relinquishing their pension for the time, have a right to a residence in this Home. At the beginning of the war, there were only 80 inmates. The present number is 150.

The average cost per man, including food, clothing, lights, fuel, and medical treatment, (but not including rent or interest on original outlay,) was for the year—

1861	\$262.00
1862	265.70
1863	312.12
1864	413.87

Those who are able and willing to work as common laborers are paid 25 cents per day; mechanics, \$14 per month.

It is very difficult to keep the men in any state of contentment. Those who have pensions to fall back upon, soon weary of the Home, and prefer to take their chances in the world of freedom with that small dependence at command. Many who resort there, are, it is said, of a rough and unruly disposition.

Now, if the sum expended upon these men were allowed them in pensions, not only would the cost of the buildings and grounds be saved—although that we do not consider a very important item—but the spirit and independence of the soldier's name and character, and his rapid return to civic virtues and independence of life, would be favored, while the vices which come from herding coarse men together in

purely masculine and official hands, would be entirely obviated.

We cannot doubt that if the pension rates were doubled, it would be as economical for the country as it would be honorable to its gratitude and useful and blessed for the invalids, widows, and orphans of the war. And this brings us to the last point.

The testimony of the letters referred to is, that soldiers' families—their widows and orphans—present a much more urgent and suffering claim than disabled soldiers themselves,* and it is even said that the widows and orphans are pecuniarily better off than those families who have had a maimed and disabled husband and father returned to them to be supported. Some of the States have made special provisions for this class, both during and since the war. Special laws have been passed in Massachusetts for their relief. But too much was done during the war, and too little has been done since, and is doing now. In the city of New York, a profuse and injurious relief was afforded the families of absent soldiers by the city, at a time when wages were high enough to make the general condition of the poor easier than at any period within our memory. Thus soldiers were encouraged to spend their wages on themselves and to their own hurt, instead of sending them home, and many women accustomed to honest labor fell into dependent and dissolute ways. But that relief was suddenly cut off, and now the difficulty is the other way. But it is not in cities alone that the orphaned families of our brave soldiers are most in need. Everywhere, and from all quarters, we hear but one story of their sufferings and distress; and we see with great satisfaction numerous private charities and public associations moving for their relief. We must not permit the freedmen, or the needy Southerners, to absorb our attention to the neglect of this most deserving class of our own people—the widows and orphans of the war. Again, we repeat, we know no way of

* NOTE.—The record of the Pension Office gives us the following figures: Applications for pensions for invalid soldiers, 97,000; for widows and orphans, 116,450.

meeting their necessities so free from objection as that of prompt and generous aid through the Pension system! It is, however, worthy of consideration whether an immediate and temporary appropriation of say five millions of dollars for the relief of the widows and orphans of the war, additional to their permanent pension, and payable by the Pension agents on some equitable scale of *pro rata*, would not be the most popular, humane, and righteous act the present Congress could pass.

We hear already of several orphan asylums called into existence by the necessities of the war. Among them, either in action or projected, and pretty sure to go into operation, are—the Soldier's Orphan Home, and Colored Orphan Home, at St. Louis; Soldier's Orphan Home, Trenton, N. J.; Orphan's Home, Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Orphan's Home, near Davenport, Iowa; Patriot Orphan's Home, Flushing, N. Y.; Orphan's Home, New York City.

Many of our other and well-established institutions also receive these orphans.

So far as collecting them temporarily in Homes and Refuges goes, it is no doubt a beneficent plan, but only to favor their dispersion at the earliest moment in private households and farmers' families over the whole country. There is a real demand for these children. Even infants are readily disposed of to trustworthy families ready to adopt them. Girls specially are wanted to rear as domestic helpers. Boys are without trouble placed in farmer's families, if they have not been picked up in the streets, or have not been trained to vice by bad companionship in crime, whether in public Refuges or elsewhere.

Finally, we may sum up our conclusions in the following manner:

1. The number of totally disabled men dependent on the public care in Asylums or Soldiers' Homes, is small, and calls for less of the public attention that it already receives. The number of Soldiers' Homes at present existing, or with means for starting, is fully adequate to the demand. Every new one projected will be of doubtful utility.

2. The worst suffering consequent upon the war, is in the families of soldiers that make no appeal for special protection; but who, from having a disabled head, or from the want of any, being widows and orphans, are smitten in thousands of cases with a poverty and desolation they never knew before. Town, county, and State relief does something for this class. But the pension system is their true resource, and pensions ought to be paid promptly and doubled in amount.

3. An extra provision for soldiers' families, for the present winter and spring, should be made by Congress, additional to everything allowed for pensions, and not less than \$5,000,000 in amount.

All of which is respectfully submitted to the Committee by their obedient servant,

HENRY W. BELLOWS,
Chairman.

APPENDIX.

[Letter of instructions addressed by the President of the Sanitary Commission to STEPHEN H. PERKINS, Esq., August 15, 1862.]

DEAR SIR—The Sanitary Commission are much exercised with the subject of the future of the disabled soldiers of this war. They calculate that, if it continue a year longer, not less than a hundred thousand men, of impaired vigor, maimed, or broken in body and spirit, will be thrown on the country. Add to this a tide of another hundred thousand men, demoralized for civil life by military habits, and it is easy to see what a trial to the order, industry, and security of society, and what a burden to its already strained resources, there is in store for us. It is, in our judgment, to the last degree important to begin now, to create a public opinion which shall conduce to, or compel the adoption of, the wisest policy on the part of our municipal and town governments, in respect of disabled soldiers—so as to discourage all favor to mendicity—all allowance to any exceptional license to those who have been soldiers—all disposition for invalids to throw themselves, any further than is necessary, on the support and protection of society. You, who have paid so much attention to social science, know how easily loose, indulgent and destructive notions creep into communities, under the name and purpose of humanity, and what temptations of a sentimental kind there will be, to favor a policy which will undermine self-respect, self-support, and the true American pride of personal independence.

In view of this, the Sanitary Commission is now studying the general subject of the proper method of dealing with our disabled soldiers at the close of the war, and, as far as possible, prior to that. The few guiding principles thus far excogitated, appear to be these :

1. As little outside interference with natural laws and self-help as possible.
2. As much moral and other encouragement and strengthening of the natural reliances as possible.
3. The utmost endeavor to promote the healthy absorption of the invalid class into the homes, and into the ordinary industry of the country.

In opposition to these principles will be the rivalry and competition of States, in generosity to disabled soldiers—similar to that which has appeared in running bounties to recruits up to an excessive and injurious height; the attempt to make political capital out of the sympathy of the public with the invalids of the war—issuing in over-legislation and over action—with much bad and demoralizing sentimentality—and, worst of all, a public disposition to treat this whole class as a class with a right to be idle, or to beg, or to claim exemption from the ordinary rules of life.

To illustrate what I mean by interference with natural laws, I should regard any general scheme for herding the invalids of the war into State or National Institutions, as a most dangerous blow to domestic order, to the sacredness of home affections and responsibilities, as well as a weakening of what may be termed the law of local sympathy. Their natural kindred are the first protectors of our invalids; the local community, the next; and the State the last. We must exhaust the two first before drawing on the last; or, rather, we must cherish and sustain the two first by every possible means before resorting to the last, which in the end will require to be heavily drawn upon. This is not a matter of mere pecuniary consideration. It is not to save the State or National Treasury, but to encourage and save the spirit of independence, to preserve the self-respect, and the homely graces and virtues of the people on which all the real dignity and strength of the Nation rest.

To accomplish this result—*i. e.*, to restore the large proportion of all our invalids to their homes, there to live and labor according to their strength, sustained and blessed by their own kindred—we must have a sound, a generous, a wisely considered pension law; and this pension law must be rid of all humiliating or enslaving character. It must be considered as the payment of what has been earned, and its payment should be made regular, punctual, immediate, and with as little loss by agencies and obstructions as possible. Moreover, the right to a pension should not rest exclusively on visible wounds. Broken constitutions, or impaired vigor, traceable unmistakably to military service, should entitle to a pension.

To employ to the utmost the law of local sympathy, the disabled and invalid soldiers should be encouraged in every way to settle in the neighborhoods from which they came, and be thrown as much as possible on the fraternal responsibility of their neighbors for employment and sympathetic aid. A sense of local or communal responsibility to leave the light employments in every village or hamlet to these invalids, should

be cherished. The emulations of towns could be depended upon for this, were a proper start given to it by a judicious amount of writing on the subject in the leading journals. In London, by some recent law, one-legged or one-armed men have some special privileges, as ticket-takers, parcel-bearers, messengers, &c. (I hope you will find out when abroad precisely what it is.) I am confident that if we begin right we can induce a most extensive and most wholesome re-absorption of the invalids of the war into the civil life of the nation, to the actual advantage of its affections, its patriotism, and its honest pride. But the subject will need careful guidance.

After everything has been done to discover and appropriate all light forms of industry throughout the whole circle of trades suited to maimed and invalid men, there will still remain those whom the small support of a pension, eked out by home protection or local sympathy and co-operation, will not adequately care for. The large body of foreigners, the reckless and unrelated, those who have hitherto been afloat, with such as are most seriously disabled, or have least natural force to provide for themselves—these must be collected in National Institutions. We don't want a vast net-work of soldiers' poor-houses scattered through the land, in which these brave fellows will languish away dull and wretched lives. Nor do we want petty State asylums, to be quarrelled about and made the subject of party politics. We want to economize our battered heroes, and take care of them in such a way as to maintain the military spirit and the national pride; to nurse the memories of the war, and to keep in the eye of the Nation the price of its liberties. After reducing to the smallest number this class, to be kept in the hands of the State, how best to deal with it is the chief problem connected with this topic; and the principal sources of light are, first, general principles, and next, the experience of other nations—for we have had next to none in our own country.

Of the general principles, a few occur to me at once:

1. Justice and policy both demand that these Institutions should be National, and not State Institutions. A war against State pretensions should not end without strengthening in every way Federal influence. This war is a struggle for *National* existence. We have found a *National* heart, and life, and body. Now, let us cherish it. I know that desperate efforts will be made to build up State asylums for these invalids. Let us judiciously discourage the idea from the start.

2. The Institutions should honor both military and civil life. They should be military in their organization, control, dress, drill, and maintain

the antecedents of the war from which they spring. The care of the trophies, arms, cannon, &c., might be assigned to them. They should be made nurseries of our military glory, and should, in some way, be skilfully co-ordinated with the popular heart, so as to feel and to animate the national sentiment. At the same time, they should be industrial—encouraging and allowing such an amount and variety of labor as would discourage listlessness and monotony, and prevent the feeling of utter dependence.

How these institutions are to grow up, is doubtful; whether *by degrees, as a necessity*, or by bold legislation from the start.

We have thought, as a Commission, of asking the Government for the control and care of disabled soldiers from the time they leave the Hospital as patients, and begin their convalescence, to the period when they are finally discharged; say four months on the average; then to create special Hospitals (with Government funds) for these convalescents, of a temporary character; to find out the homes, and favor the establishment in their own local communities of all able to be thus provided for; having an eye, through our village affiliated associations, to their well-being and future career, and aiding in every way the success of the just principles laid down in the earlier part of this letter.

Then, retaining, partly at our own expense, (that is, out of the spontaneous bestowments of the people,) all those disabled men who are the proper subjects for permanent asylums, finally to inaugurate a great asylum, with branches, partly under our own control and management, partly under that of the Government, which by degrees should embrace and embody every wise, humane, and patriotic idea suited to the case. Our dependence for success in such a scheme—very crude as yet—would be the possession of more and earlier thought, better and fuller information, a profounder and wiser plan—such a plan as would recommend itself—and which, on statement, would so engage the consent and affections of the people, as to secure its adoption by Congress.

If this matter be left to politicians, or be hurried through Congress by busy men, it will want all profound merits. It will be sure to violate our American principles, to wound political economy, and to botch the whole idea. If, on the other hand, we can slowly mature a wise, ripe plan, it may become a germ of the utmost beneficence to the soldiers and to the nation.

We are very anxious to have a careful report on the subject of the foreign institutions for the care of invalid soldiers, before the next meeting of Congress. And at the meeting of the Executive Committee of the

Sanitary Commission recently held at my house, the following resolution was offered by Mr. Olmsted, and passed :

Resolved, That S. H. Perkins, Esq., be requested to study the military pension and invalid system of the principal European nations, visiting the more important establishments in which invalid soldiers are maintained, and to report his observations to the Commission, with the conclusions of his judgment in regard to an invalid and pension system for the disabled soldiers of the present war.

I hope you will consent to do this work for us. I know no man so well fitted, and I really think it can be laid upon you as a clear call of Divine Providence. Nothing was said on the subject of remuneration. We are all volunteers in this good work. But I think there is no doubt that any necessary expenses, incurred in this service, extra to your natural expenses, would be cheerfully reimbursed by this Commission; and, if this is a point of interest or importance, I will have action taken upon it at the earliest moment.

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I am, dear sir, very respectfully and cordially, yours,

HENRY W. BELLOWS,
President of the Sanitary Commission.